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# Breast feeding: Contemporary Issues in Practice and Policy

By Janet Dalzell, Elizabeth Rogerson, Linda Martindale

The authors of this book have aimed to engage one of the most important debates surrounding breastfeeding—factors that influence women’s decisions. The authors have captured a vital and well-referenced view point, by addressing the complex decision to formula feed, and why women persistently opt out of the best way to feed and nurture their baby.

*Breastfeeding: Contemporary Issues in Practice and Policy* uses both an historical and a modern perspective to explore events and practices that affect the ability of the professional to support women to breastfeed. It differs from other texts on breastfeeding by devoting sections to changing and implementing clinical practice through exploration of issues that affect the initiation of breastfeeding, such as self-efficacy. The book shrewdly acknowledges the current practice and difficulties professionals face to ensure informed consent is gained without harassment or discrimination.

The level of knowledge and expertise certainly validates the authors position to write this book, as it is based on wide, varied experience and knowledge of breastfeeding policy, learning and practice implementation, which is demonstrated clearly in the ‘About the authors’ section. The contributors include practitioners, academics, theorists and policy makers.

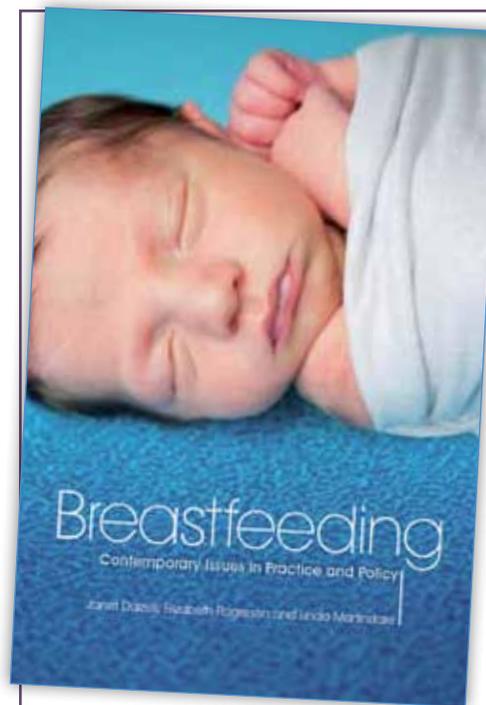
The first chapter sets the scene for the historic perspective of breastfeeding and development of policy, which allows the reader to be fully informed about how breastfeeding initiatives and political interest has unfolded, from the late 1970s to present day. There are a great many historic references to the World Health Assembly with how they relate to local,

national and international policy; gradually incorporating the well known baby friendly initiative and the less well known Innocenti Declaration and International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

A breastfeeding book that omits a discussion on the benefits of breastfeeding to mothers and babies would be ineffectual. This takes place in Chapter two, and provides important evidence-based literature to enforce the rationale for the woman’s decision on whether or not to breastfeed. The concept is explained to the reader with the relevance of sound knowledge and understanding of the complex nature of women’s decisions. The authors have critically analysed specific areas which are hidden to many health professionals such as self-efficacy of the woman and the effect it has on her decision to formula feed. It is a particularly complex concept to understand yet paramount to ensure women are heard and not judged. The vignettes are a valuable descriptive resource to validate the current topic, they are timely placed during each point to provoke self-awareness and reflection from the woman’s perspective; this is coupled with questions to prompt reflection with a ‘practice expert passage’ to deliver the relevance of both.

Strategies to encourage successful breastfeeding are discussed by identifying barriers faced with the lack of exposure to breastfeeding. The discussion is based around the UNICEF/WHO Ten Steps to successful breastfeeding and provides useful information to support each step, such as the hormonal influences, inducing lactation and self-attachment by adding that particular standard highlighted in a box for quick reference. Medical influences and cultural habits are also introduced with sound evidence to endorse the promotion of breastfeeding in complex situations. In my professional opinion, this book has covered this topic with cultural sensitivity.

Chapter four appears to be most relevant to health visitors as the main theme is the



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continuation of breast feeding. However, the chapter explores the complex and dynamic interplay between the baby, mother, family, the socio-political practices and the professional practice which contribute in the cessation of breastfeeding. The careful links to birth, confidence in the mother, importance of rapport between mother and professional and being able to take a non-judgemental lactation history are effective tools which would appeal to a widespread audience including midwives, lactation consultants, general practitioners, nurse educators and any reflective practitioners involved in women, their baby and family-centred care. The final part of the chapter considers the relationship with breastfeeding when other factors impact on decision making such as returning to work, alcohol consumption and social drug use. Although this a seamless conclusion, more information surrounding asking these complex questions would have been useful.

The book also categorize the nutritional benefits of breastfeeding for the infant

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through analysing each component in breast milk. Although insightful and extremely interesting, the terminology and level of biology and chemistry was at times technical.

The penultimate chapter discusses some of the challenges and issues that underpin evidence-based practice. The text offers helpful frameworks to identify value in research as breastfeeding is oversubscribed with myths and biased information; the case studies were a fundamental method in the delivery of this.

Due to the weighting of chapters and the current relevance to practice, specifically aimed at strategic planning and implementation on a local level, and taking into consideration the demographic and social context of breast feeding, this book is fairly academic; however, it is relevant to all professionals involved in breastfeeding. The historical perspective and the evolution of current traditions alone would enhance any professional practice.

Current practice is in great need for this style of book. It guides the reader through the chapters by incorporating current issues with problematic practice.

There are detailed anatomical and physiological references with useful implementation methods. Helpful additions such as the 'practice experts points' expertly draw together the message of that particular statement.

*Breastfeeding: Contemporary Issues in Practice and Policy* should be recommended to midwives and to BSc students in particular. Valuable insight and extensive knowledge from this book will benefit the plight of health professionals to build a grass roots approach and implement sustainable change.

This book is high-quality original reading, with relevant advantageous benefits to the breastfeeding collective. **BJM**